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Czechoslovakia: The liberals around party leader Dubcek are well on the way toward sweeping conservatives out of the central leadership.

According to the Yugoslav news agency Tanjug, President Novotny's resignation may be expected at any hour. Quoting "well informed sources," the agency maintains that only the form in which the resignation is to be tendered remains to be resolved.

One of the candidates recently often mentioned as a replacement for Novotny is Josef Smrkovsky, party central committee member and government minister, who in the early 1950s was sentenced to life imprisonment for political crimes.

The faltering President has already signed an order removing from office two of his staunchest supporters, Minister of Interior Josef Kudrna and Prosecutor General Jan Bartuska. Novotny's action came after the presidium of the National Assembly had voiced its lack of confidence in the two and suggests that his grasp on political power has significantly weakened.

Other key Novotny supporters who have resigned in the past few days include the premier of Slovakia and the chief of the central council of trade unions. Two other secretaries of the trade unions council also resigned and four more are under fire.

Defense Minister Lomsky, another Novotny man, is under heavy fire, and his resignation could come at any time. Presumably it has been held up by the desire of the party leaders to assess Lomsky's role, if any, in the suicide of Deputy Defense Minister Vladimir Janko and the defection of Major General Jan Sejna. Lomsky also appears to have Russian support.

Dubcek and the liberals are confronted, however, with conservative opponents who still have seats on the

party presidium and in the central committee, even though some of them may have been ousted from their government jobs. After a session of the party presidium on 14-15 March, the liberals apparently forced through a decision against postponing a central committee meeting until next month. This meeting is to decide on personnel changes and the party "action program."

The liberals are increasing their hold on the powerful party central committee apparatus. During its marathon meeting, the presidium decided to turn over responsibility in the central committee for education, science, and culture to Gestimir Cisar, an outspoken liberal who for years defended the interests of intellectuals in the party and government. [REDACTED]

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Poland: Student demonstrations are continuing in various provincial cities, but active support from other elements of the population is not materializing.

Violent clashes with the police again took place on 14-15 March in Poznan. Students in Warsaw and Krakow reportedly are boycotting all classes.

Although student demands have widened to include free speech and freedom of assembly as guaranteed by the constitution, most reportedly avoid "political" questions. Students at provincial universities have passed numerous resolutions seeking greater academic freedoms and warn of further protests if the regime does not comply soon.

The regime shows no signs of satisfying student demands. Mass workers' meetings, which continue to be staged by the party throughout the country, are avowing loyalty to Gomulka and demanding punishment for his opponents whatever their political stripe, from "Zionist elements" to "revisionists and liberals."

This line was emotionally echoed on 14 March by Edward Gierek, a politburo member and party chief of the key industrial province of Katowice. Gierek is the first, and so far the only, major regime leader to address himself to the current crisis. At a rally of over 100,000 workers in Katowice, he called for the ouster "once and for all" of Gomulka's domestic opponents. A resolution passed by the workers included an unusually strong pledge to support Gomulka's leadership "not only with words, but with action."

Gierek's speech amounts to a major effort to rally the workers in support of Gomulka's leadership. It divests the rebellious students of hope that they might receive some understanding from Gierek, who was popularly believed to be responsive to new ideas and change.

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USSR: Moscow is reinforcing its tough line toward dissidence at home because of the turmoil in Poland and Czechoslovakia.

A Pravda editorial of 14 March demanded more than "passive loyalty" and identified the enemies of "socialist patriotism" as "apathy, bourgeois ideology and bourgeois nationalism." The editorial called for a tighter rallying of the popular masses around the party, usually a reliable indication of dissatisfaction with the state of relations between the party and the public.

Neither this editorial nor any other Soviet press or radio commentary mentions the demonstrations and political changes that have occurred in Poland and Czechoslovakia. Foreign radiobroadcasts have probably brought knowledge of these events to a sizable Soviet audience, however, and the editorial indicates a Soviet determination to strengthen discipline among Soviet citizens.

The Soviet leadership may fear that events in Eastern Europe will become a matter of contention within high party circles. The long-awaited meeting of the party central committee reportedly has now been further postponed, perhaps to dodge consideration of Eastern European developments.

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Greece: The Papadopoulos government has publicly set a timetable for the adoption of a new constitution.

Prime Minister Papadopoulos yesterday released the text of a new draft and announced that the long-awaited constitutional referendum would be held on 1 September. Public comments on the draft will be welcomed until the end of May, when presumably they will be reconciled with the junta's own constitutional aims.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] In producing a final draft, the junta's efforts are likely to be directed mainly toward reducing the power of the monarchy in favor of a strengthened executive, and to limiting the size of Parliament.

The announcement of the timetable gives the appearance of motion toward a return to democratic processes while leaving a number of important issues unresolved. These include questions related to the possible return of King Constantine, a definite date for parliamentary elections, and the means whereby the military intends to preserve its power position under any new parliamentary system.

[REDACTED]

Chile: The resignation yesterday of Finance Minister Raúl Saez places President Frei's economic program and his party's political fortunes in danger.

Saez, one of Latin America's most respected economists, accepted the finance portfolio just one month ago on condition that Frei adopt a stringent anti-inflation program. A wage readjustment bill, which Saez considered to be an integral part of the program, was opposed by political figures on all sides, including some of Frei's Christian Democrats.

A deal, worked out this week with the Communist Party, appeared to ensure congressional approval of the bill. The compromise, however, so weakened the legislation that Saez resigned. Saez's departure from the cabinet will seriously weaken business confidence in the government.

Failure to enact stabilization legislation now could lead to high inflation and budgetary difficulties. Such a development would greatly increase the electoral prospects of the Communist-Socialist coalition in the March 1969 congressional elections. [REDACTED]

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NOTES

Philippines: The nature of the Philippine civic action group in South Vietnam has been brought into question by Senate opponents of President Marcos. A coalition of Liberal and dissident Nacionalista senators has proposed that the Philippine engineering unit be replaced by a medical assistance group. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

Congo (Kinshasa): President Mobutu apparently has agreed to the repatriation of the foreign mercenaries in Rwanda if their countries of origin promise never to allow them to return to Africa. The official Congolese news agency reported that Mobutu intends to offer this proposition to the commission on mercenaries set up by the Organization of African Unity. The story is attributed to unidentified sources, leaving Mobutu room to renege if complications arise. [REDACTED]

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